

No. 90.

IN ASSEMBLY, FEB. 4, 1857.

REPORT

Of the Trustees of the State Idiot Asylum.

To the Hon. the Legislature of the State of New-York :

In compliance with the provisions of the act establishing the Asylum for Idiots, the subscribers, trustees of the institution, respectfully submit this their sixth annual

REPORT.

No provision having been made by the Legislature with reference to the management and government of the institution, the trustees felt it to be their duty, on the removal of the asylum to the new buildings, at Syracuse, to make such changes in its organization as should render it best adapted to fulfil the end designed by its establishment. To effect this object they adopted as their model the special provisions enacted for the government of the Insane Asylum at Utica, which were supposed to embody the views of the Legislature as to the proper mode of management for such an institution. A brief summary of these provisions may not prove uninteresting.

The trustees are to have the general direction and control of all the property and concerns of the asylum, and to take charge of its interests; they are to receive no compensation for their



services, though they are to be reimbursed for their actual and reasonable traveling expenses in attending the meetings of the board. They are to hold semi-annual meetings, and during the intervals between these meetings, they are to exercise a proper supervision over the affairs of the asylum through their executive committee. This committee is to visit the asylum on the first Monday of every month, to examine into its management, inspect the condition of its pupils, audit all bills presented for payment, and decide upon the admission and dismissal of pupils; they are also enjoined to keep a record of their proceedings for the inspection and approval of the board.

The treasurer is to draw from the State Treasurer all monies appropriated by the Legislature for the institution, and receive all monies collected from counties for the clothing of pupils, as well as the sums derived from the tuition fees of paying pupils. He is to pay all bills properly audited and endorsed by the executive committee, making a report of the bills thus paid, and a return of the vouchers thus received at the semi-annual meetings of the board. This statement of the treasurer is to be embodied in the annual report of the trustees to the Legislature.

The few contingent expenses of the asylum are to be presented in the form of a monthly bill from the superintendent, and are audited as any other bill.

By this arrangement the pecuniary responsibility resides in the executive committee, and no bills are paid by the treasurer, except they are endorsed by at least two of that committee.

The general supervision of the affairs of the institution, with the advice and counsel of the executive committee at its monthly meetings, is intrusted to the superintendent.

He has the sole charge of the management and instruction of all the pupils sent to the asylum, and the direction and control of all persons employed in any capacity about the establishment. He makes provision for all the wants of the asylum, and is responsible for a prudent and judicious expenditure of its funds. He is also to keep a journal of all his proceedings, for the inspection of the executive committee at its monthly

meetings, and subject at all times to the examination of any member of the board.

In the report of the trustees last year, a detailed statement of the mode of expenditure of the monies appropriated by the State for building purposes was given. As the construction account was not then entirely closed, it will be proper to give at this time a brief summary of such expenditures :

Carpenter's work, &c.,.....	\$23,459 82
Mason work, excavation, &c.,.....	31,169 02
Plumbing, gas pipe, kitchen and laundry ap'atus,	5,328 99
Heating and ventilating,.....	2,611 46
Architect and supt. of building,.....	2,268 09
Contingent expenses, including printing, freight, grading, fences, interest on land, fuel for warm- ing building, &c.,.....	1,416 85
*Loss on land at Albany,.....	1,047 75
	<hr/>
	\$67,301 98
Amount loaned, current expense fund,....	2,698 02
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Amount appropriated,.....	\$70,000 00
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The building fund is still indebted in the following sums :

To John Bridgford, mason,	\$1,956 12
James Christie, carpenter,.....	1,810 84
W. L. Woolett, architect,.....	535 00
Pruyn & Lansing,.....	216 00
Syracuse Water Works company,.....	493 91
gas fixtures,.....	620 00
Alterations in building steam boiler, &c.,.....	519 15
Balance on hand, due E. W. Leavenworth,.....	3,000 00
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	\$9,151 02
	<hr/> <hr/>

*It will be seen by our last annual report that we were then in possession of the land purchased as a site for the Asylum in the city of Albany, which was estimated at its original cost of \$7,047.45. The trustees have since effected a sale of the premises for \$6,000. Part of these proceeds, owing to the failure of an appropriation last year, has been loaned as above to the current expense fund; and the remainder, except such part of it as still remains in the treasury, expended in discharging a part of our liabilities on construction account.

Deducting the sum loaned current expense account, and the loss on the land at Albany, sold since the last report, and we have a total expenditure for *buildings* at Syracuse of \$72,405.25.

During the last fiscal year there has been drawn from the State treasury, for the current expenses of the asylum, the sum of	\$8,076 15
Received from pay pupils,	2,333 88
From counties for clothing,	400 00
Borrowed from construction fund,	2,698 02
*Note discounted,	5,000 00
	<hr/>
	\$18,508 05
Deduct amount in treasury,	2,653 10
	<hr/>
	<u>\$15,854 95</u>

This has been expended as follows :

For provisions and supplies,	\$6,189 37
Furniture and furnishing,	1,314 94
Postage,	22 71
Fuel and lights,	1,166 15
Stable stock, farm labor, tools, &c.,	876 91
Salaries, wages, and labor,	6,158 97
Sundries,	88 90
Printing,	37 00
	<hr/>
	<u>\$15,854 95</u>

There are now outstanding debts against the asylum, on account of the current expenses and furniture, to the amount of \$5,203.93.

This, with the amount already stated as due on construction account, gives a total indebtedness of \$14,354.95.

This indebtedness of the current expense fund, is in the main owing to the fact that, with the single exception of an appropriation of \$1,000, the whole expense of furniture, farm and stable

* To carry on our operations, in the absence of an appropriation, this money was obtained from one of our banks on the individual responsibility of a portion of the trustees.

stock, since the first organization of the asylum, amounting to some \$12,000 or \$13,000, has been taken from the sums appropriated for current annual expenses.

The trustees perhaps have been too desirous, from the beginning, of presenting estimates of expenditure at the lowest possible rates; estimates which, however, have proved unduly small in view of the very high prices of provisions, and especially of the advanced wages rendered necessary to secure the services of that class of attendants which the infirmities of the pupils require. Moreover, during the last year, the occupancy of the new buildings has involved an enlarged scale of expenditure, necessarily out of proportion to the increase in the number of pupils admitted. In such an establishment there is always the same number of teachers and attendants required for the various classes, and the same amount of room to be warmed, lighted and kept clean, with a small number of inmates as when entirely full. But, notwithstanding our expenditures have thus been increased from year to year, the trustees are gratified in being able to state that the average annual cost of the maintenance and education of the pupils of the asylum has been no higher than at the other charitable institutions of the State.

To carry on the affairs of the institution successfully for the coming year, we shall need an appropriation from the State of \$18,000. With this sum it is proposed to provide board, with the necessary care and instruction for one hundred indigent pupils, besides making provision for a smaller number whose friends may be able to pay only a portion of the cost of their maintenance and education.

The board at their semi-annual meetings in the new institution, have had an opportunity of observing the perfect adaptation of the building to the purpose for which it was constructed, its effectual means of ventilation and warming, the manifest healthiness and convenience of the location, the peculiar fitness of the farm attached for rendering a productive return for the labor bestowed upon it, and finally, what is of the most importance, the effective organization of the whole force of the asylum in accomplishing the results for which it was designed. These results

are every year becoming more and more apparent, and must commend themselves to the judgment, as well as the heart of every philanthropist. Already the asylum has afforded a home and a suitable education to more than a hundred different pupils, whilst it has conferred a lasting blessing upon the families from which they have been taken. And the hope is fondly indulged that thousands more who would otherwise be burdens upon society, may yet enjoy its benefits; and by its judicious management be rendered capable of self support, if not useful in the community.

We commend the annexed report of the superintendent, furnishing in detail the operations of the asylum for the past year, and a statement of some of the results of its management in individual cases, to the consideration of the Legislature.

JAMES H. TITUS,
FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,
HENRY N. POHLMAN,
F. F. BACKUS,
ALLEN MUNROE,
HIRAM PUTNAM,
HAMILTON WHITE,
LYMAN CLARY,

Trustees.

JOHN A. KING,
H. R. SELDEN,
L. BURROWS,
J. T. HEADLEY,

Trustees ex-officio.

OFFICERS.

Superintendent,

HERVEY B. WILBUR, M.D.

Assistant Superintendent and Teacher,

HENRY M. SAVILLE.

Matron,

MRS. ELIZA F. MULFORD.

Assistant Matron,

MISS P. CARPENTER.

Teachers.

MISS S. P. YOUNG,
MISS ALVIRA WOOD,

MISS LODEMA HUTCHINSON,
MISS JULIA BURBANK.

Steward,

R. FRISSELLE.

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SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.

To the Trustees of the New-York Asylum for Idiots:

GENTLEMEN—Five years have now elapsed since the first organization of this institution. These have been years of uninterrupted prosperity. It has been gradually increasing in point of numbers, and steadily growing in the public estimation. The commodious and beautiful building at present occupied by the asylum, and the liberal and increasing annual appropriations for its support, are unmistakable recognitions, by successive Legislatures, of the claims of the idiot upon the State, for such an education as is adapted to his capacities and his needs.

No intelligent person, now, who understands the nature of the education proposed for this class of children and the results obtained, where it has been applied, can reasonably doubt, that a large proportion of their number are susceptible of instruction and improvement.

Those most familiar with the results in our and sister institutions, will not hesitate to claim that this instruction is of as much value, theoretically and practically, to the class of idiots, as is the education afforded by institutions for the blind or deaf and dumb, to their pupils; and that the family and society are equally benefited in the one case as in the others.

Aside from the general satisfaction in the public mind of the success of the institution in its peculiar field, no complaints from any source, that I am aware of, have been brought against the wisdom or policy of its management.

The same general organization of the institution exists now as at the date of my last report to the board.

Some changes, however, have taken place among those connected with the asylum at that period. Mrs. Kincaid, who, for
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some six months, held the office of matron, died the latter part of last March. She had previously filled the post of matron at the Syracuse home for the friendless, to the complete satisfaction of all connected with it. She brought to her new duties here the same christian benevolence, and the same high qualifications that had rendered her beloved at the "Home," and her death was deeply regretted by all who knew her. Her successor, Mrs. Mulford, has already shown herself as competent and efficient. We have been compelled to lose the services of two of our former teachers, Miss Clark and Miss Loring. The former had been connected with the institution from the commencement at Albany, and the latter for nearly three years. Any change of teachers, like this, will, of necessity, disturb, temporarily, the system of instruction, for experience is of special value, with pupils like ours, who, in addition to their peculiarities as a class, have strong individual peculiarities, all of which are to be studied, in order to be overcome. But these young ladies mentioned had special qualifications for their peculiar duties, intelligence, fidelity, patience and enthusiasm; as all visitors to the asylum, during the past five years, can well testify. I owe it to all of my present assistants to express my hearty commendation of their labors, and their success. During the past year, the number on our list of pupils has been, on an average, about 90. The largest number, at any one time, 89. Fifteen of these were pay pupils; the remainder beneficiaries of the State. All parts of the State were quite equitably represented among the pupils.

Since our vacation, in August, we have filled the vacancies made by removals at that period, and added to the number of pupils till it amounts to 100.

Properly to understand the changes that have taken place among the pupils in the asylum, during the past year, it is to be remembered, that it is an educational establishment. It was designed for the benefit of such idiots as are of a teachable age and condition. As to the former particular, that of age, it is easily determined. As to the latter, experiments only could furnish the means of decision.

It has never been claimed by the most sanguine advocates for the education of idiots, that there were no exceptions to the principle that they were susceptible of improvement.

The policy adopted at the asylum, in the reception of pupils, has always been a liberal one, and designed to embrace those of all grades of idiocy. Thus, in filling a vacancy in any district, the first applicant has the preference. The line of exclusion has debarred only the epileptic and insane.

When epilepsy is accompanied by a loss or impairment of the intellectual faculties there is very little to be hoped for in the way of radical or permanent improvement. With the recurrence of convulsions, there is the liability of a complete eradication of the results of all previous instruction. This may be sudden or it may be gradual.

To furnish them with a mere home is not within our province, for the effect of witnessing their convulsions is unfavorable to the other nervous children.

The exclusion of insane children was equally demanded, for the reason that the means used in our system of management and instruction for idiots were not adapted to improve the condition of the former.

In looking over our list of pupils for the past year, (from Sept. 1st, 1855, to the same date in '56,) I find that the whole number was one hundred and four.

Of these, four were dismissed, because they proved on trial to be confirmed epileptics; three because they were found in like manner to be insane.

In two cases pupils have been removed at the request of the superintendent, after a short residence at the Asylum, there being strong evidences of latent pulmonary disease that rendered a speedy and fatal termination probable.

Four have died while inmates of the institution. Of these two died of tuberculous disease of the lungs, existing when they came; one of marasmus; the fourth from chronic dysentery. These two last cases were children only seven years of age. One

of them had walked but a year, and the other had never walked, and had but little use of his arms.

Notwithstanding this amount of mortality we have occasion to be grateful for a year of remarkable exemption from disease among the pupils and attendants. The hospital room has scarcely been occupied, except by those who came to us diseased. It is to be remembered that there is in many cases of idiocy a very great degree of physical infirmity. The want of mental development, the cause of their being placed at an asylum, is but one manifestation of their imperfect organization. To such as escape the diseases of infancy and childhood the age of puberty is a perilous one. The common complication of scrofula with idiocy not uncommonly results in consumption at this period of life. The habits engendered in the isolation of idiocy frequently hasten this result. Occasionally the very circumstance designed to alleviate their condition, the removal from home to an asylum; when attended with homesickness, quickens the development of latent disease.

Two have left us, whose parents had removed from the State. Five were dismissed who had been received at an age that rendered any considerable improvement hopeless. Three of these were pay-pupils from other States. In the case of one, who had been with us five years, I was constrained to request his removal as an incurable. Even in that case I think that the friends would speak of him as being very greatly improved.

Five have *graduated*—three in a condition to be taught in a common school—the other two are now pupils in asylums for the deaf and dumb.

The other removals, three in number, were for no better assignable reasons than the inclination of the pupil. The seventy-five other of our old pupils have improved under our system of management to such a degree that their continuance at the asylum has been desired by their parents and permitted by the officers of the institution.

With all these changes, and during the entire history of the asylum, I think I can assure you that there has been felt a

general satisfaction with the results attained, not only by the public, as I have already stated, but by those most interested, the parents and friends of the pupils.

Candor, however, compels me to confess, that in a State charitable institution it is somewhat difficult to please all parties who avail themselves of its benefits. Some of the patrons are not unfrequently particular and fastidious about what costs them nothing; while those who render a full pecuniary equivalent for the labor bestowed upon their children, as commonly add to this material compensation the expressions of a deep felt gratitude towards all who are in any manner connected with their management and instruction. I doubt not, then, that a feeling of partial and temporary disappointment may have existed at the results in individual cases. This is not surprising, nor should it detract from the merit of the institution or the system of management or instruction pursued in it. The causes of such disappointment will be readily appreciated. Few parents have a just idea of the actual or relative mental condition of their deficient children. Perhaps they have heard exaggerated accounts of the success of educational efforts in the case of idiots, or they visit an institution and witness the very marked improvement exhibited by a certain number of the most promising cases. They compare these with their own children according to their own ideas of their peculiar deficiencies. They thence infer a more rapid and radical improvement in the case of the latter, whom they fondly regard as having still greater natural endowments. They expect too great results and they look for them too soon. Besides, the tests of mental development, as applied by parents are very often unjust. This which is true in all systems of education is especially true in ours. Generally, however, time and reflection allay the disappointments thus produced. Parents come to learn that the difference between most idiots and persons with ordinary endowments is a very wide difference. They learn to notice the particular deficiencies on the one side that constitutes this difference. They learn at last to appreciate the actual change in the pupil for the better, in the form of increased sensation, in the awakening of the perceptive faculties, in the exercise of more judgment in small matters, in improved habits, in more ready

obedience, in more self-control, and finally as the result of all these, in a greater capacity for useful occupation.

The capability for useful occupation and the willingness to be thus occupied, satisfies the greatest need of the idiot and will ensure his future comfort and happiness, if he is subjected to right influences after he shall have left an educational institution.

No mere school acquirements, in the ordinary form, however wonderful they may seem to the casual observer, or however gratifying they may be, for the time, to the friends of the pupil, will fulfil the true end and aim of his education; though they may be, when judiciously applied, important and useful means of mental discipline and development. I am gratified by observing that a very proper change of public opinion has taken place, in respect to the relative importance of the two classes, or kinds of instruction afforded by our asylum.

We have not, as yet, introduced instruction in any trade in this establishment, and perhaps, with the average age of our pupils, it may not be desirable, but we have employed many of our pupils in simple industrial occupations. Nearly all of our girls are learning to sew. Many make beds, wash dishes, and are engaged in minor household duties. Quite a class of boys have been employed in the garden, upon the farm, and in grading the grounds about the new buildings. Some are only occupied under the eye of attendants; while others are capable of working steadily, alone, and with no one to direct them.

When our farm is once brought under a judicious and systematic cultivation, I doubt not that a carefully kept farm account will show no little productiveness of labor, on the part of the pupils of the institution.

During the past year, with the labor of one gardener and two farm hands, and the assistance of the boys, we have raised all the vegetables used in the asylum, a great variety and profusion; we have harvested more than 30 tons of hay, 80 bushels of oats, 500 bushels of potatoes, besides the labor necessary in constructing additional drains about the buildings, and the removal of loads of dirt, in grading.

We have lost the greater portion of our crop of late vegetables, by the inroads of cattle from the neighborhood. This was owing to the bad condition of our boundary fences.

This leads me to say, that we very much need a high picket fence, entirely around the grounds of the asylum. In no other way can we be secure, in the possession of our crop and fruit, and avoid trouble from the runaway habits of some new pupils.

I am more and more convinced of the impossibility of giving just and correct views of the results obtained with the pupils, in an asylum like ours, by any general, or condensed statements, in the annual reports; I therefore add, in an appendix, particular descriptions of some of their number.

During a portion of the past year, we have had the valuable services of Dr. Edward Seguin of Paris. This gentleman, it is well known, was one of the earliest of the European instructors of idiots. The observation of his successful application of a system of instruction of his own invention, gave the first impulse to the philanthropy of England to engage in the novel work of educating idiots.

One cannot wonder at the eulogistic testimonials he has received from distinguished gentlemen in Europe and from scientific commissioners, who has witnessed the peculiar qualities he brings to the work in which he has been so long engaged. Keen in his perceptions, he has a great faculty of generalisation. With a thorough knowledge of the imperfect human development that he strives to obviate, he possesses both tact and patience in a remarkable degree. He is an enthusiast, and yet most practical in his ideas of the true character of his chosen life-task.

Family considerations to the great regret of the superintendent and I may add of the Board of Trustees, prevented his longer continuance in the institution.

It remains for me to say that we still have very pressing applications for admission to the asylum from all parts of the

State. We therefore need enlarged appropriations from the Legislature to meet these claims. You will, I doubt not, urge this subject upon the consideration of the Legislature about to assemble. The very lateness in appreciating the needs of the class of idiots and their susceptibility to education, should now increase the substantial acknowledgment of their claim upon the State.

A kind providence has watched over the interests of the institution thus far. To that same source of good let us look for increased means of usefulness.

With an expression of my gratitude to the various members of the Board, and especially to the members the Executive-committee, who have devoted so much of their time to the interests of the Asylum, this report is respectfully submitted.

H. B. WILBUR,
Superintendent.

TRUSTEES.

JAMES H. TITUS,	FRANLIN TOWNSEND,
HENRY N. POHLMAN,	FRED'K F. BACKUS,
ALLEN MUNROE,	HAMILTON WHITE,
HIRAM PUTNAM,	LYMAN CLARY.

Ex-officio Trustees.

JOHN A. KING,	HENRY R. SELDEN,
JOEL T. HEADLEY,	L. BURROWS.

Permanent Chairman.

HENRY N. POHLMAN.

Secretary.

ALLEN MUNROE.

Treasurer.

HAMILTON WHITE.

Executive Committee.

HIRAM PUTNAM,	JAMES H. TITUS,
ALLEN MUNROE.	



APPENDIX.

It is difficult to convey any adequate or correct idea of the actual mental development, or improvement in individual cases, or even in the mass of our pupils, by the general statement of results usually embodied in the reports of the superintendent to the board of trustees.

For this reason I propose to add, in this appendix, a brief description of some of the pupils, who have been in the institution during the past five years.

No pretensions are made to scientific order, or accuracy in these descriptions. The only aim will be to truly represent the condition of the several pupils when received. The progress they have already made, and the ultimate results that may be hoped for, by the continuance of proper educational means.

The reader is of course familiar with the main features of idiocy. It should be remembered, also, that the range of idiocy is a very wide one, and that the rate and amount of progress in each individual case can only be fairly estimated by noting the starting point in their educational course. Besides this, the proper objects of educational effort in the case of idiots are equally various, and are to be duly considered in estimating the results obtained.

Every one will readily understand, to illustrate this by other special systems of education, that the comprehension of language, sign and written is the great end of deaf mute instruction. Language, to them, is an instrument of thought, as well as the medium of communication with their fellow men.

With the blind, the end is to compensate, as far as possible, for the loss of sight, by the exaltation of the other senses.

In the case of idiots the problem is a more complicated one.

I have, in former reports to the board, mentioned some of the educational means adopted for overcoming the mental deficiencies of the idiot. It will suffice, now, to state the general mode of employing the time of the pupils at the asylum; for the means referred to will incidentally appear, to some extent, in the description of the progress of individual cases.

From the very nature of idiocy, it will be perceived that an institution designed for its amelioration will embrace both the management and instruction of the subjects admitted within its walls. The peculiar condition of its various classes will determine the prominence to be given in each case to the one or the other of these objects.

There are now one hundred pupils in the institution, two thirds of whom are males. One portion of the house is devoted to the girls, and smaller boys, under the charge of female attendants solely; the remainder is occupied by the larger boys, some under the care of male, and others of female attendants.

The building is so constructed as to admit of the classification of the pupils in each department, both in school and out of school hours. There are five school rooms, as many dining rooms, besides the sitting, or day rooms. These, with a large gymnasium, and 4 enclosed piazzas, all well heated, in the winter, permit a thorough classification, under all circumstances.

There are two classes of dormitories. In the smaller ones but 3 or 4 pupils are allowed. In the larger ones 8 or 9 pupils are accommodated. In every room there is an attendant, and each child has a separate bed.

As the asylum combines, in its organization, both the family and the school, the children are, a portion of the time, under the charge of the matron, with her assistant and attendants; during the remainder, in the hands of the teachers. The former attend them at all other than school hours, in their rising, dressing, washing, bathing, at their meals and in their plays, and with a certain portion, in their household, or other industrial occupa-

tions. They watch their habits, and teach them, as far as possible, to help themselves.

During the school hours, the attempt is made in all cases to apply a properly graduated scale of educational tactics, from the physical exercises of the gymnasium up to the proper studies of the most advanced classes.

I may mention, in addition, that not only are industrial occupations regarded as a part of our system of instruction, as a means as well as an end, but amusements have no inferior place assigned them in the role of our arrangements.

A. T.—A boy 7 years old. In this case the organs of hearing were very slightly affected, but there existed an almost complete want of perception of sound. He did not speak, and had very little idea of language; he was quite a good-looking and active boy; he has been under instruction a year; he is now beginning to read simple words, both printed and written; writes in a very good hand a great variety of words, names of familiar objects, names of all the pupils in school. He displays considerable imitative faculty in copying various figures from drawing cards and upon the black board. In geography, he has learned the principal points on the map of the United States; he is just beginning in numbers, writing them as far as fifty. He hears more readily, and articulates most common words. He would not now attract attention by any peculiarities, even in a common school.

M. R.—A little girl nine years old, came Oct. 1855; deaf and dumb as well as imbecile. She has now been with us a year, and is in a condition to enter an asylum for deaf mutes. She knows many written words; can herself write the names of all familiar objects; has been taught to sew and many other household occupations. No one can doubt the success of our labors in this case.

M. A.—A boy of twelve years, small of his age, and with a very idiotic look and very disagreeable habits. He was de-

scribed, when brought to the Asylum, as generally good tempered; but if aroused dangerous in his intercourse with other children—as not being very cleanly in his habits. There was a want of development in his physical frame, his extremities being very short. He spoke with effort: he is now in our first class in reading, and with but little difficulty reads words of two syllables; he is very studious, and is making marked and constant progress; he copies from a book the written characters, and forms sentences simple and compound; he writes easily and quite accurately; he is very familiar with the map of the U. S., and tolerably so with that of Europe; he is but just beginning with numbers—writes numbers up to fifty, and can add two to any number. There has been a great change in his personal appearance; he will undoubtedly be capable in a few years of useful labor on a farm.

A. P.—A boy of ten years, who came only about four months since, an idiot from birth; he was not cleanly in his habits; was very mischievous, passionate and troublesome; he could not speak distinctly; could not distinguish forms or colors; had no idea of written language; he is now improved in his habits; he speaks much more distinctly; can distinguish quite a variety of colors and give their names; can read forty or fifty printed words, and can count as far as eighty.

S. Q.—Came Nov., 1853; a little girl twelve years old; she was small of her age, and with a very small head; she could not speak, but attempted to say yes and no; the saliva was constantly flowing from her mouth; she had received no instruction; was very passionate, and when once aroused, it seemed almost impossible to conquer her either by coercion or kindness. She has now been with us three years; is in our first class; she is improving in her articulation, and is very earnest in her attempts to speak; she can read and write a great number of words; is a good scholar in geography; can count and write numbers to one hundred, and can add two to numbers as far as twenty; she is now very easily managed; can sew very well, and is very useful in household matters, performing daily duties in making beds, washing dishes, &c.

J. W. R.—A boy of twelve years, rather small of his age; his head is smaller than any whose dimensions I have seen recorded; the greatest circumference of his cranium is only $13\frac{1}{4}$ inches; he was not cleanly in his habits; had but little idea of language; was passionate; could not speak at all; he has now been under instruction a year; he can distinguish a variety of forms and colors; he knows the names of all objects in the school room and about the house, and also the names of all the pupils in school; he recognizes a great number of pictures of objects; he is beginning to speak, and has already learned several printed words as the representatives of familiar objects; he is now making sensible progress every day.

J. M.—A boy of eleven years, who came to the asylum Dec. 11, 1851. He was well formed and healthy, though slightly affected with chorea; his eyes were prominent and staring, he had an inordinate appetite and ate ravenously whatever was placed before him; there was an excessive flow of saliva but otherwise he was cleanly in his habits. In appearance he was quite imbecile; he was an imbecile from birth and had an idiot sister; he had none of the every-day knowledge of childhood having lived only for the gratification of his appetite; his speech was imperfect and indistinct; he was very good tempered and affectionate and easily managed. The change of residence, in his case, insured more reliably the gratification of his appetite, and he was contented and free from homesickness; he had never had any instruction; he could not distinguish forms or colors, had, therefore, no idea of pictures as the representatives of objects; he is quite a neat looking boy; he has improved very considerably in school matters, but is especially changed in his capacity for useful labor; he works quite intelligently on the farm, conversing very well about common concerns.

L. S.—A boy of twelve years old; came November, 1853; he was stout and healthy; his speech was peculiar; the attempt had been made to instruct him but without any success; he could neither read, nor write, nor count; he had been three years under instruction. He can read understandingly in words of two or three syllables; he can write a tolerable hand; he can construct sentences introducing different parts of speech, such as

the noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, &c.; he is quite a good scholar in geography, being familiar with nearly all the common outline maps, the geographical definitions, &c.; in numbers he is making good progress; he can add and multiply, performing simple problems in these rules very rapidly; he spent the past summer at work in the garden and on the farm, making himself very useful and not requiring any oversight; he can be instructed to go to the city or to church; he will soon be in a condition to be bound out on a farm.

C. E.—A little boy $4\frac{1}{2}$ years old; came to the asylum in the autumn of 1851. He had been apparently healthy and intelligent till about two years of age, when he began to have convulsions. These continued till a short time before he was brought to the institution, affecting his intellect till, in the language of his father, “his mind was a complete blank;” he had begun to speak before the appearance of his convulsions, but the later ones had entirely severed the connection between the brain and his vocal organs, so that, for the space of two or three years, he never made or attempted to make an articulate sound; he was small of his age, but with a large head and lustrous eye. He not only did not speak, but had no idea of language; he had no ideas of form, or size or of color; he had no idea of obedience; no sense of danger. His father mentioned, in illustration of this point, that he would walk into a stream of water like the canal without fear. Not having any legitimate exercise for his nervous and muscular power, he was constantly restless, constantly occupied in the simplest acts of mischief; he had no idea of personal cleanliness, and in all respects required more care than an infant. Commencing with the simplest physical exercises, this boy has been through the whole course of our system of training. He now associates with our best class of pupils; he understands almost everything that is said to him; he can articulate almost any word of two syllables; he can count; he can read in the first reading-book used in our school; also reads the written character; he is in a class in geography, being able to point out on the outline map of the United States all the prominent

points ; he is now much more quiet, and withal quite free from his former mischievous habits.

J. H. C.—Came Nov. 1853, a boy 12 years old ; deaf and dumb and quite deficient in intellect ; he was a stout boy, well formed but very awkward ; the son of a poor widow, he had run at large with the boys in a city till he acquired many vagrant and mischievous habits ; his tongue protruded from his mouth, and his chin and dress were wet with saliva. Though naturally good tempered he had grown by bad companionship to be very quarrelsome and uncontrollable. Our whole course of instruction was necessarily modified by his deafness. He remained with us nearly three years ; when he left he was a neat, good-looking and well-behaved boy ; he wrote a beautiful hand ; he could draw well ; he could read many words ; he understood the principles of addition and multiplication ; he was very capable and useful on the farm and in the garden ; he left us to enter the institution for the deaf and dumb in New-York.

I subjoin extracts from two letters, the first sent me soon after his removal, by a gentleman who had always known the lad, and the second kindly furnished me by a professor in the New-York institution, in reply to my inquiries when he had been some four months under their instruction.

“ I never saw as much improvement in any human being.”

“ *Dear Sir.*—Yours was duly received, and I have delayed answering it till now that I might be able to give an answer to your inquiries about C. His teacher tells me that he learns very well and is among the first in his class. There is quite a spirit of rivalry between him and another boy, and thus he improves more rapidly. He enjoys good health and is quite a pleasant boy and engages with the others in their sports.”

The description of the four following cases I give in the language of one of the commissioners appointed by the Legislature of Connecticut to investigate the subject of the education of idiots, written after a visit to our asylum :

“ N. and W., now eleven and twelve years of age, were taken from the idiot house on Randall’s island, by Dr. Wilbur, in Dec., [Assembly, No. 90.]

1851. Their appearance, as described by persons who saw them at that time, must have been painful and disgusting in the extreme. Both had been idiots from birth, both were partially paralyzed, and both entirely dumb, and not capable of understanding more than a dozen words. So hopeless was their condition that the physician at Randall's island, who was absent when Dr. Wilbur selected them, on his return, wrote to Dr. W., expressing his regret at his selection, as he feared that it would only bring disgrace upon the effort to instruct idiots, to attempt the instruction of those who were so evidently beyond the reach of improvement.

"Both now exhibit as much intelligence as ordinary children of their age. Neither speaks very fluently, in consequence of some paralysis still existing, but both are improving rapidly in this respect. Both write well on the blackboard. In thorough knowledge of grammar and geography very few children of their age are their equals. In a very severe and protracted examination in geography, embracing minute details in regard to the topography of most of the countries on the globe, and many particulars in regard to physical geography, and drawing maps upon the blackboard, neither they nor the other members of a class of six or seven missed a single question. In grammar, both supplied adjectives, nouns, verbs, or adverbs, to given verbs and nouns, with remarkable promptness and to an extent which would have severely tasked my vocabulary. In arithmetic both exhibited perfect familiarity with the ground rules, and Nattie gave at once any and all multiples of numbers as high as 132, and added, multiplied, and divided fractions with great readiness.

"In Bible history they related, partly in pantomime, but in a most graphic way, any required Bible incident. The extremely amiable and affectionate manners of these two interesting children, and the intense activity of their newly developed intellects, render them particularly attractive to the visitor.

"J. C., a girl of fifteen years of age, has been under Dr. Wilbur's care a little more than four years. When received, she was mischievous and vicious, very nervous, and could not speak distinctly. She could not be left alone with other children,

from a propensity to injure them. She knew some of her letters, but could not be taught to read or write by any ordinary methods.

“She now reads well, writes a handsome hand, is remarkably proficient in geography and grammar, and has made good progress in addition and subtraction. She sews very neatly, and is very capable as an assistant in household matters. Her nervousness is no longer troublesome, her waywardness has entirely disappeared. In respect to moral training she seems more advanced than most of the other pupils. She manifests a remarkable familiarity with Bible history, and with the events in the life of our Savior. When requested to repeat the Lord’s prayer, she did so with a reverence, an impressiveness, and an evident understanding of its petitions, which exhibited in a very favorable light her intelligence and thoughtfulness; and as I listened to this once vicious and wayward idiot, thus uttering, in our Savior’s own words, her petitions to the throne of heavenly grace, I was more deeply impressed than ever before, with the adaptation of that sublime prayer to every human want.

“E. D., now about fifteen, has been under instruction about four years; could not be taught to read, write, count, or distinguish colors by any ordinary mode of instruction; was mischievous in his propensities, and inactive in his habits. He is now a manly, well-behaved boy, reads, writes and draws well, and possesses as much practical knowledge, and full as much talent, as boys of his age generally.”

APPENDIX B.

The following extracts from the by-laws of the asylum will show its aims, and the condition upon which pupils are received:

“The design and object of the asylum, as established by the action of the Legislature, are not of a custodial character, but to furnish the means of education to that portion of the youth of the State, not provided for in any of its other educational

institutions. Those only will, therefore, be received into the asylum who are of a proper school-attending age, and for such periods of time as shall in the estimation of the board of trustees, suffice to impart all the education practicable in each particular case ; and in conformity with the regulations hereinafter specified.

“Children between the ages of seven and fourteen who are idiotic, or so deficient in intelligence as to be incapable of being educated at any ordinary school, and who *are not epileptic, insane or greatly deformed*, may be admitted by the superintendent with the advice and counsel of the executive committee. Applications in behalf of others shall be referred to the action of the board of trustees.

“The parents or next friends of those in whose behalf applications are made for admission as pupils, shall make answer in writing to such questions as the superintendent may prescribe.

“They shall, moreover, if of sufficient ability, engage to pay such reasonable sum for the education and support of the pupils, and to furnish them with such proper clothing while in the institution as shall be stipulated by the superintendent, and they shall in all cases be bound to receive them back, when required, free of expense to the asylum.

“The State pupils in the asylum will be selected in equal numbers, as far as may be, from each judicial district, from those whose parents or guardians are unable to provide for their support therein.

“The State pupils will be expected to come to the asylum, provided with a supply of neat and substantial clothing, adequate for the first six months, after which period their clothing will be furnished by the asylum at the expense of the respective counties of which they are residents, as in the case of the deaf and dumb, and blind asylums of the State. A bond will be required in all cases to ensure the removal of the pupil, when required by the superintendent, free of expense to the institution.

All pupils will be received upon trial for one month, at the end of which time, a report upon the case will be made to the parents or parties sending them.

“ The education furnished by the institution, will include not only the simpler elements of instruction usually taught in common schools, where that is practicable, but will embrace a course of training in the practical matters of every-day life : the cultivation of habits of decency, propriety, self-management, and self-reliance, and the development and enlargement of a capacity for useful occupation.

“ There shall be a vacation during the whole month of August, unless otherwise directed by the board, at which period all pupils must be removed from the asylum by the parents or guardians, if required by the superintendent.”

Applications for admission to the asylum must be made to the superintendent.

H. B. WILBUR, M. D.

Syracuse, N. Y.









